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occupation to farm-work (e.g. a handicraft, carried out in one's leisure-time) exist there, nor, finally, has its connexion with the political life of the town ever been as strong as in those other places.

COLLECTIVE LABOUR

The co-operation of the *efakó* group is more or less regularly supplemented by a system of mutual assistance and large-scale collective labour among the villagers, an institution which the Nupe have in common with all other Nigerian tribes. Its help is enlisted in all cases in which the *efakó* group by itself would be insufficient to secure efficient cultivation —be it because of its smallness, or an unforeseen obstacle such as illness among its members, or irregular rains,[1] or simply because its ambitious programme demands larger co-operation than is at its disposal. The Nupe have two systems of collective labour devised to operate in different situations: *egbe* (the Hausa *gaya*) and *dzolo*.

The *egbe* is the more general type of collective labour. It is not limited to farm-work, but is organized for every kind of work which demands large-scale co-operation and specially for work done, not for one household alone, but for the community at large. Thus the building or roofing of a big house, for example the chief's house, repairs of a bush-bridge or a stretch of road which is maintained by the village, are carried out in *egbe* work; repairs of the town wall, formerly, and repairs of the building of a Native Administration rest-house, to-day, are equally typical occasions for the *egbe*. However, in Bida and in many larger places a large proportion of work of this kind has now been taken over by professional labour. But in Bida as well as in the hinterland farm *egbe* is still practised regularly.

The help of *egbe* for farming is enlisted mostly for tilling and the first and second weeding, more rarely for the third weeding and the clearing of new yam-plots. A few days before the *egbe* is to take place the young men of the family go round to their friends and neighbours and invite them to the *egbe* on such and such a day. *Egbe* work is on the whole work for the younger people. A ready frame for their co-operation exists in the age-grade associations of which all the young men of a district are members. As they arrange throughout the year meetings and feasts in which they all join, they now organize the collective farm-work for one of their fellow member's family. The family head sends out a special invitation to drummers and musicians to play at the *egbe*. The accompaniment of music plays a very important part. Finally, the host prepares food and beer for the feast with which the *egbe* invariably ends.

Early in the morning drummers and flute-players walk out to the farm on which the *egbe* is to take place. They play and sing while they walk, beating on their drums the characteristic rhythm of *egbe* music, and everyone who meets them knows at once their destination. Some of the

[1] I once witnessed a third weeding carried out by collective labour in September, after an unexpected dry spell. The farmer explained to me that if the rains had been normal and ordinary farm-work not delayed, he would have carried out the third weeding in ordinary family work.

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working party follow the musicians, the rest meet later out on the farm. When all have assembled the young men start work. They work in a group of ten or twelve, starting on the same side of the field, leaving plenty of space between each other. Everyone is working his own ridge and, having finished one, he turns to the next with hardly any pause. The drummers and flute-players walk alongside the field abreast of the workers. Older men stand at the side, watching, criticizing, commenting. Often you can hear them call one of the workers by name, exhorting him to ever greater efforts, or shouting impatiently: 'Quicker, quicker!' When one field is finished some of the young men, the captains of the age-grade association among them, will execute a short dance, balancing their heavy hoes in the air and heavily stamping on the tilled field, while the drummers are arrayed behind them, beating the rhythm of the age-grade *take*.[1] Then workers and audience—and every *egbe* attracts a large audience—move on to another field, while some of the older men may stay behind to sow the newly tilled plot. On another occasion I saw the young men working in two groups of about equal strength, each under its own leader—one of the captains of the age-grade association. The groups started on opposite ends of the field, working towards each other. Now and again a worker would get up, survey with one glance the work which his group had been doing, and cry out in a long high-pitched yell; others were shouting with deep hoarse voices at every stroke of their hoe. The speed with which they worked, the whole atmosphere of the *egbe*—the constant drumming, the shouts from the audience—had something deeply exciting, almost feverish. I have seen a team of fifteen young men, the oldest between 19 and 20, the youngest 14, clear and till a farm-plot of one acre in two and a half hours.[2] The *egbe* work still more than *efakó* work is animated by an intense spirit of competition. The worker who has quickly finished his ridges will stand up and look round, proudly showing off his splendid work; he will chaff his fellow workers about their clumsy progress, their crooked ridges; he executes a little dance, singing, and shaking his hoe to show how leisurely he can work and still beat the others. When all the work is finished the whole party, musicians, workers, and onlookers, repair to the house of the owner of the farm. Here the feast which concludes the *egbe* is celebrated with plenty of food, corn-beer, and dancing, and much boasting and prancing of the young men, who are the heroes of the occasion. Nor is their boasting and prancing without significance. In the village communities where the traditional age-grade system is still practised, one of the important side-issues of the *egbe* is that it represents a regular test in which the young men establish their qualification as farmers. From *egbe* to *egbe*, every year, their skill and their achievements are watched, compared, and judged by the older people. In the last *egbe* of the season, or some other outstanding *egbe* (e.g. on the farm of the chief),[3] the results of this competition are made known and the young

[1] See p. 395.

[2] In another case I saw six young men clearing a densely overgrown bush-plot for yam-cultivation of about a third of an acre in one hour.

[3] An *egbe* of this kind near Bida at which new titles were bestowed was

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farmer who did best is given by his age-grade association the title *Sode*, the second highest title that can be bestowed on young men. A man who is once made *Sode* keeps his rank until some other claimant snatches the title from him, or if he had no competitors, until he joins the 'old men' and retires from the arena of the *egbe*. In the urbanized age-grade associations of Bida this title and the whole usage have disappeared. In other large places which follow Bida fashion, the title *Sode*, though still in existence, has become a title of minor importance, a long way down the list of age-grade ranks.

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The primary advantage of collective farm-work lies evidently in the time-saving which it makes possible. The second weeding, for example, which normally takes from five to ten days, can be done by *egbe* in one day. But this valuable help must be paid for. The cost of an *egbe* of from fifteen to twenty workers—the cost of food and drink for the guests and the pay of drummers and musicians—is between 6*s*. and 8*s*. *Egbe* work, then, implies a calculation of investment and return, cost and profit. To-day, farmers try to lower the cost of *egbe*. In an *egbe* near Bida (the *egbe* just described, in which the workers were grouped in two teams) the owner of the farm contributed music and food for thirty people, but no beer or palm-wine. The fare was simple—no meat or fish—but plentiful: porridge cooked in palm-oil for the men, half a bowl per head (1 lb.), and corn-gruel for the women. This cheap *egbe* cost only 4*s*. yet proved still sufficiently attractive to make a large group of workers attend.

Yet there is one element of 'profit' in this calculation which cannot be put down in shillings and pence, and which is of utmost sociological significance. *Egbe* work is performed only on family farms, i.e. on the farms of family heads and old men in general. Younger people, whether they still work under the family head or have made themselves independent, are not entitled to the help of the *egbe*. Thus the *egbe* provides a twofold balance, in favour of the old men who cannot work as efficiently as the young, and in favour of the sociological head of the family group who, though perhaps no longer able to command the services of a large body of co-workers, can still command the assistance of collective farm-work.[1] How real this balance is was illustrated in the example given before (p. 244) of an old man, the family head, cultivating fields equal in size and yield to the fields worked by his two adult sons. With the splitting-up of families and the reduction of the *efakó* group, with the disappearance, that is, of the clear-cut distinction between family and individual farms, the significance of the *egbe*, too, must weaken. Information gained from a large number of independent witnesses testifies to the gradual loss of importance of *egbe* work in Nupe productive life. Once practised regularly on every farm it has now been

performed on the new experimental farm of the Agricultural Department which was tilled in collective work.

[1] Recognition of this privileged position of the sociological head of the group in a wider sense is expressed in the traditional rule, still valid in most peasant communities in Nupe, that the first *egbe* of the season is performed on the chief's land.

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not as good as that of a farmer?' There is no evidence, incidentally, that physical disability, an ailment which might impair their working capacity, is a reason for sending boys to Mallam schools. The choice of the Mallam profession is, in the full sense of the word, a free choice of profession.[1]

The Mallam schools both in Bida and in the peasant districts are steadily increasing. The Nigerian Census mentions over 1,000 Koran schools in Niger Province, most of which are found in Nupe Emirate. I have estimated that Bida town possesses over 100 Koran schools, with over 1,000 pupils (out of a population of 24,000, with 5,000 male children). Kacha has fifteen Koran schools, Kutigi, a much more primitive and semi-pagan village, six, of which two already give higher instruction. This spreading of Mohammedan education leaves no doubt that parents increasingly desire their children to receive the benefits of Mohammedan learning. We have to accept this as a general trend in modern Nupe society, not so much towards true education—which few of the boys will ever attain—as towards the higher social status—the status of a leisured-class intelligentsia—which the position of a Mallam, rightly or wrongly, suggests.

Earlier in this book I have referred to the profession of Mallams as one of the mechanisms of social mobility. I have also called Mohammedan education, by means of which the religion and, indirectly, the whole spiritual background of the ruling classes is diffused throughout the country, one of the 'binding forces' of the Nupe state. Here we have found concrete evidence to support these statements. Let me summarize the main conclusions which we can draw from the present discussion. First, the profession of Mallams comprises contrasts of wealth and rank, which occur nowhere else in the framework of a single profession. The only common feature is that of a life without manual work, and of a certain social status raised above that of the ordinary commoner. Secondly, the Mallam profession is the only profession which we discovered in Nupe which is not ruled by the motive of material gains. On the contrary, people will sacrifice even the security of work on the land for the meagre and insecure income that goes with the rise in status and the attainment of the life of the leisured class.

AGE-GRADE ASSOCIATIONS

The Nupe name for age-grade association is *ena gbarifuzi*, lit. 'society' or 'association of the young men'.[2] Although nearly every Nupe boy or

[1] I had wondered whether there was any relation between the professional choice and the size of the family, whether perhaps in large families a son would be more likely to study for Mallam than in small families, where every member would be needed for farm-work. Then again, I thought it possible that in these days of the breaking-up of the family-unit orphans would be placed more readily in Mallam schools. Neither correlation, however, is true—as is shown in these figures: of 32 students of farming stock 9 were only sons, 10 were one of two sons, 9 had brothers who also studied the Koran, and 4 were orphans.

[2] Informants who have picked up a few words of pidgin-English translated *ena* as 'company'.

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561 young man belongs to one or the other age-grade association, the age-grades are not a compulsory organization. No coercion is used to induce individuals to join the association, but failure to do so would be regarded as unusual, and under certain circumstances even suspicious. The constitution of the *ena gbarúfuži* is based essentially on the agreement of a group of individuals who, with clear knowledge of the purpose and the rules of the organization, form themselves into an age-grade association. Sociologically, then, our translation of *ena* as association is fully justified.

561 369 The description of the age-grade system of Nupe is complicated by the large number of variations that occur. There exist, above all, certain essential differences between the age-grade association in Bida and in the village; we shall, in fact, have to contrast the two throughout this discussion. The rules governing the internal organization of the age-grades are elastic: much more so in Bida than in the village. In the village association, too, minor differences occur, sometimes even between certain local associations in the same village. Thus, the age-factor itself is not rigidly defined, and the entrance age and age-limits of the different grades vary widely. Nor is the duration of the single age-grade fixed universally or permanently. In the village we find a more rigid arrangement: in Kutigi, for example, all age-grades last six years, in Jebba four years. In Bida the term of the age-grade association varies from four to ten years, and the duration may vary in different grades, in accordance with the wishes of the members.

In the village each grade is represented by one *ena* only, and age-grade associations ascend as a rule *en bloc* from grade to grade. Changes in the membership, so far as they occur, as the *ena* advances to higher grades, take the form of a slight decrease caused by death or emigration. In Bida each grade is represented by a number of associations, and prospective members have the choice of alternative associations. The rules of membership are more flexible in Bida. One may skip a grade—'rest', as the people say—one may start in a higher instead of the bottom grade, or one may leave the association before it advances to the highest grade, even before its term comes to an end. In two villages age-grade associations of which I examined the membership, which was 17 and 18 in the highest grade, had remained almost unchanged through the three grades of which the age-grade association is composed. In Bida there is much coming and going. In two *ena*, for example, the highest grade of which numbered 26 and 30 members, respectively, only 7 and 15, respectively, had gone through all three grades, 16 and 10 through two grades, and 3 and 5 had joined the highest grade without having passed through the lower grades.

561 The most common and, in the eyes of the people, normal type of age-grade association comprises three grades, which are numbered from the top downward: the senior grade is called First Grade, the middle grade, Second, and the junior grade, Third Grade or *ena dzakangiži*, Children's Grade. We shall deal, in what follows, with this most typical three-grade organization. The average age in the senior grade is 20 to 30, in the second 15 to 20, and in the junior grade 10 to 15. The age-limit for

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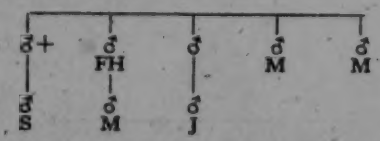
membership is about 30. It is interesting to note that the fact of marriage is of no significance—the highest grade comprises both married and unmarried men. The sign that a man is past the age of membership of 'young men societies' is the appearance of the external symptom of manhood, a beard—*za na de nũkpayi na da ena be à*, 'a man who has a beard no longer joins the association'. In certain small communities the age-grade system may be limited to the two higher grades; in other communities a fourth, junior, grade is added, called *ena wawaglži*, Association of the Small Children. This lowest grade is not taken seriously: it is regarded as mere *dzodzo*, play—of the children-playing-at-adults type—and shares with the other grades only their superficial external characteristics. The junior, third, grade is also in some measure regarded as less serious and significant than the higher grades, and as essentially a preparatory stage. Certain important activities of the higher grades are, as we shall see, of necessity excluded, or reduced to insignificant proportions, in associations which are composed of young boys. In one respect, however, the junior age-grade makes its own specific contribution to the age-grade system; it is the only one which has its counterpart also in the other sex. The highest age-grade, too, possesses certain specific features, in the form of certain age-grade ranks which are not bestowed on members of junior groups.

As *ena* membership is defined by age, and not by generation, it happens occasionally that, in large families, the young men of different generations but of approximately equal age belong to the same *ena*, and that young men of the same generation are members of different age-grade associations. The following genealogical diagram will illustrate a typical case. The letters S, M, and J indicate membership of the senior, middle, and junior age-grade, respectively; FH means family head, and a cross a deceased family member.



The separation from family and homelife is indeed one of the most characteristic features of the *ena gbarífuži*. The people attach considerable weight to the fact that the bonds and forms of obligation which are implied in the *ena* are of an entirely different, and specific, nature. Even small boys, the youngest members of the junior *ena*, will tell you with an air of importance that the *ena* has nothing to do with family, home, or parents. The father? 'Yes, we tell him, and we ask him sometimes to help out with money or food for a feast which we arrange. But he has no say in our *ena*.' Fathers will confirm this. In Kutigi parents were quite surprised, and laughed uproariously, when I told them about the titles which had just been distributed in a newly started junior grade; the boys had gone with the times and introduced titles which did not exist in the days of their fathers' *ena*. But for my information the parents

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would have remained unaware of these changes, which were regarded as a purely 'internal' matter of the age-grade association.

Let us now see how an age-grade association starts its life. We will begin with the Bida *ena*. Here the procedure is the same both in the foundation of a new *ena* and in its promotion to a higher grade. A number of boys or young men who have become well acquainted with one another in various walks of life, possibly when participating in a previous *ena*, decide to form themselves into an age-grade association. They meet in the house of one of them, a group of only six or seven members at first, and discuss how many more members they can muster. Each of the founders of the prospective *ena* then enlists other friends and acquaintances of the same age, till eventually the membership reaches the required number, twenty or twenty-five. The first thing now is to find a 'captain' and a 'president' for the new association, or, in native terminology, an *Etsu* and *Ndakotsu* (lit. Grandfather of the *Etsu*). The *Etsu* is a member of the age-group itself, as a rule one of the original founders, who is elected by the group.[1] The *Ndakotsu* must be of senior age: in the junior grades he will be a member of the next higher grade, and in the senior grade an adult who has 'passed', *go ga*, i.e. already gone through all the grades. Under their *Etsu* the members of the prospective *ena* approach a certain young man whom they regard as a suitable candidate, and request him to accept the position of president in the new association. Every member of the Nupe age-grades is assigned a certain rank which defines his place on the miniature social scale of the age-grade association for the duration of the *ena*. It is the first official duty of the newly elected *Ndakotsu* and *Etsu* to call a general meeting in the house of the *Ndakotsu* at which the distribution of these *ena* ranks is to take place. The elastic rules which govern duration and membership of the Bida *ena* imply also that no fixed rules can be laid down with regard to the time when associations usually start or 'change over' to higher grades. Moreover, in these associations in which only a small nucleus of members may remain faithful to the *ena* throughout its three grades long waits are likely to occur between the termination of one *ena* and the founding of a new association of a higher grade.

In the village the procedure governing the foundation and promotion of the *ena*, although the same in principle, differs in certain significant features from that obtaining in Bida. To begin with, the time when age-grade associations are started and promoted to higher grades is fixed permanently: it falls towards the end of the dry season, an arrangement which gives the new association time to be fairly launched when the agricultural season begins, and ready to undertake the tasks which, in a farming community, fall to the age-grade associations. The enrolment of members for the new *ena* is much less selective and arbitrary. In a small community where most boys of approximately the same age know each other, and normally meet in work or play, there is no need to canvass the new *ena* among friends and acquaintances. Nor is there any special search for captain and president of the new association. The village associations have, in fact, their *Ndakotsu* and *Etsu* appointed for

[1] Sometimes the captain of the second grade bears a different title, *Sokyara*.

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them in advance. Shortly before the existing associations are dissolved previous to their reorganization on a higher grade, the outgoing presidents of the different grades appoint, as a last official act of their term of office, one of the members of their group as '*Ndakotsu*-elect' of the next junior group, i.e. the group which, in the new term, will take the place of the outgoing group. The *Ndakotsu*-elect will then take charge of the organization or reorganization of the new *ena*, and also of the appointment of a captain for the new association.

In these age-grade associations which rise *en bloc* to higher grades there is no gap between the termination of the old and the foundation of the new *ena*. The association which is about to be dissolved and promoted stages a last public appearance in a great feast, with music and dancing, to which all friends and relations are invited. A few days later the members of the *ena* meet again for the preliminary discussion in the house of the new *Ndakotsu*, for the distribution of the age-grade ranks which will be assigned to them in the new *ena*. When all ranks have been satisfactorily allotted the group arranges another large festivity, which is to announce publicly its reorganization and to inaugurate the new term. I had the good fortune to be in Kutigi in 1936, the year when the six years' term of the local *ena* came to an end and the general 'change-over' took place. It fell in the middle of March; the last public meeting of the old association was on the 7th of March, the session in the house of the *Ndakotsu* took place five days later, and the inaugurative meeting of the group in its new form as a senior grade on the 2nd of April.

Now, what are the qualifications for the position of a *Ndakotsu* and *Etsu*, and according to what principles are the *ena* ranks distributed? For the election of the *Ndakotsu* a well-established social position, good reputation, intelligence, and also a pleasant nature and, if possible, an open hand, are regarded as essential qualifications. A satisfactory financial position is essential because the *Ndakotsu* will be expected to entertain and to organize parties—and to do it in style. Most of these conditions also apply to the election of the group captain. The members of a newly founded Bida *ena* explained to me: 'We made Mohamadu our *Etsu* because he is a nice fellow. We all like him. He has good connexions; you see he is invited to the court; besides, he has plenty of money, and both his father and his mother are rich. He is also ready to spend it when we have a feast and want drummers and dancers.' On the other hand, a very ambitious young man who had been *Etsu* of an *ena* (of the second grade) and who hoped to be made *Etsu* again in a new, senior, association whose captain was resigning shortly, complained to me that his chances were slight, for he had not much money and could not afford the expenses which he would be expected to meet. It is implied in the nature of these qualifications that the *Etsu* is not always the oldest member in the group. In one *ena* which I analysed the *Etsu* was 20 when the *ena* started, and there were three members older than he. But as a rule he is of higher social position, and often better educated, than the rest of the members. Thus in a Bida *ena* which consisted almost entirely of tailors and embroiderers the captain was a weaver, the son of the Bida guild-head. In another group of a similar composition the

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captain was an expert cap-maker, who made the expensive, fashionable embroidered caps. And in a group the members of which came mostly from the classes of the nobility, the captain was the son of a late Emir. It has become the fashion for captains of Bida age-grade associations to adopt an additional, allegoric or symbolic, title, which would also give the *ena* its name. Bida associations compete with each other in the invention of high-sounding names, which should evince the refinement and selectness of the *ena*. Thus one *Etsu* was known as *Etsu Yimani*, 'King Faith', as the *ena* over which he presided prided itself of the piety of its members; another captain called himself *Etsu Hankuri*, 'King Forgiveness', for more or less the same reason; a third *Etsu Turu*, 'King of the Europeans', a title which was meant to bear witness to the fact that this *ena* was organized on 'European lines' (to be explained presently).

The financial qualifications and those of status are of less importance in the village, where inequality of wealth and status are much less strongly marked, although even in the village *ena* the captain may be of a somewhat higher social position than the rest of the members, e.g. the son or brother of a village elder of high rank. The symbolic names of age-grade associations are absent in the village, where age-grade associations are neither as numerous as in Bida nor as interested in advertising their refinement and selectness.

The allotment of ranks in a newly founded association of the youngest grade is largely a formality—although the popularity and influence of the young boys among their age-mates will to some extent be taken into account. We have seen that these junior age-grades are generally regarded as representing a preparatory stage rather than a fully fledged *ena*. In the higher grades the distribution of ranks becomes much more serious. Change of rank during the lifetime of the *ena* occurs only when a member dies or withdraws prematurely, especially if he was holding one of the higher *ena* ranks, which must be represented. But when the *ena* terminates and the members form themselves into a new group, a complete reshuffle takes place. As the different grades use largely the same rank-system this redistribution of ranks at the end of an *ena* makes conspicuous the promotion, non-promotion, or degradation—as the case may be. These changes in the holding of *ena* ranks reflect faithfully the success or failure of individual members in the previous association, the capability shown in the performance of group activities, and the popularity enjoyed among comrades and superiors. The eager competition notwithstanding, the task of distributing ranks justly and to everybody's satisfaction does not, as a rule, take very long. I have seen these discussions carried through in one or two afternoons. But then, the general discussion is only a last, formal, step. Mostly, the two leaders of the group have decided the distribution at least of the more important ranks long before the first general meeting. The *Ndakotsu* of a prospective village *ena*, for example, knew a few months before the group was actually called into being exactly whom he was going to invest with the three highest ranks. As a rule the authority of captain and president is sufficiently strong to carry the vote. But instances of disagreement and

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long fruitless discussions also occur, both in town and village, and sometimes a compromise has to be effected by introducing a special title (with the word *Tsowa* before any rank, equivalent to 'vice-' or 'sub-'), which will satisfy a refractory member without upsetting the arrangement at large. Severe degradation, on the other hand, is rare, as it can be easily circumvented in these associations which are not compulsory, and cannot force members to accept their status. This is a typical instance: A very ambitious and vain young man of Bida who had held high ranks in previous *ena*, but was given a very low rank in a senior grade, resented this treatment as unjust; he could, however, do nothing except to show his disdain by disinteresting himself in the association, and staying away from all their meetings. Actually he never told me of his shameful treatment when we discussed his association with the *ena*; I learned of it only by chance when, examining a certain association, I came across his name on the list of members.

The village *ena* comprises one rank which can be won only in strict competition. We have spoken of this rank already (p. 250): it carries the title *Sode*, and is bestowed on the best farmer of the group. Sometimes there is also a second farmer's rank, won in the same way for which, rather incongruously, the title *Maiyaki*, 'Minister of War', has been chosen. These ranks are taken only in the highest and middle grade, and are won in open competition at the first of the more important *egbe* occasions of the season, frequently at the *egbe* performed on the farms of the village chief. Traditionally, the title *Sode* ranked next to that of group captain in importance and precedence. To-day it has been degraded to a lower place on the scale of ranks. Of course, neither the title nor the particular qualification for which it is bestowed is recognized in Bida. The rank of *Sode* is also the only rank that may change hands (at least in theory) during the term of the *ena*. Although this happens very rarely (I have not met with any actual instance), all people agree that if at one of the occasions of collective farm-work an appointed *Sode* proved himself to be inferior in skill to another member of the *ena*, he would have to surrender his title.

Age-grade ranks are largely copied from the political rank-system obtaining in the community to which the *ena* belongs. It is not a very exact copy—although the *ena* tends to arrange its ranks according to the order of precedence which they follow in the political hierarchy. In Bida the distinctions between the different classes of political ranks are not observed, and military and civil ranks, office titles and titles of the royal nobility, are bestowed indiscriminately. The village *ena* remains more faithful to the rank-system of the community, and would, for example, adopt its typical, possibly uncommon, titles of elders. But as the membership of the *ena*—especially of the junior grades—may be considerably larger than the number of titled village elders, ranks from outside the traditional rank-system may have to be introduced, preferably from the rank-system of the capital. The younger generation is indeed always ready and eager to adopt such innovations. Rank-systems of heterogeneous nature, and rather arbitrary precedence are the result. However, we must not forget that the rank-systems of many villages ar

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561 554 themselves similarly heterogeneous and arbitrary, including Bida titles among its traditional village ranks.

561 554 516 The system of precedence involved in *ena* ranks and grades is taken very seriously, and the rigid rules of etiquette which govern it are enacted with all solemnity. Much of the *ena* business takes place, as we shall see, within the single *ena*; but when members of different grades meet—for example, at family feasts in the house of a member, or at collective farm-work—submissive or condescending behaviour marks their relation towards each other. Members of a junior grade will never dance when members of senior grades are present, except with their special permission and at their request; in collective farm-work the junior grades work at the back of the team, at less important and less conspicuous tasks. Age-grade etiquette is even more emphatic within the individual association. At communal meals the 'subalterns' will wait till their superiors have eaten; at *ena* feasts subaltern and senior ranks will never dance at the same time; when greeting a superior, the age-grade member of lower rank will squat down and bend his head, exactly as prescribed for intercourse between superiors and inferiors in the social scale of 'real life'.

561 554 369 In the village *ena* it is only in general terms that the ranks indicate social position on the rank-scale of the association. In the town *ena* the ranks are sometimes chosen so as to indicate and do justice to the special gifts, or the special social position outside the *ena*, which characterize individual members. In this the organization of the town *ena* reflects the more highly differentiated social structure of urban society. Thus a Bida *ena*, composed largely of illiterate members, assigned to a young man who had been educated in the Government Middle School the title *Naïbi*, a rank of the Mohammedan clergy which can be held only by scholars. The rank-list of another *ena* included the rank *Borotí*, lit. Head of the Bororó, its holder being the son of the late Emir's 'regent-delegate' for the Bororó Fulani. Some Bida age-grade ranks indicate a certain official capacity held by a member in the *ena*. Thus I found a rank *Dzufã* (lit. pocket) bestowed on a young man who acted as 'purser' of the group. All purchases and payments for *ena* purposes were made through him; when, for example, a member decided to give a party for the group he would place his money contribution in the hands of the *Etsu*, who would then hand it over to the 'purser' as the member responsible for financial arrangements. In one *ena* I found the rather curious rank *Mataushe* (Hausa, lit. 'the man who rubs', i.e. 'masseur'), by which name a certain slave or body-servant of the Nupe king was known whose special duty it was to massage the feet of his master. In like manner it was the duty of this 'office holder' in the age-grade association to massage the feet of his *Etsu* at meetings of the group when his master felt tired.

561 554 177 One group of ranks typical of the Bida *ena* deserves special attention, namely the ranks which are organized on 'European lines' and copy, not ranks and offices of Nupe society, but ranks, offices, and even names of Europeans with whom the Nupe had come into contact. Such titles are often amusing and even puzzling. In one *ena* the head of the group was

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not called *Etsu* but *Gomna Ture*, European Governor. Other ranks in the same *ena* were *Kantoma* (Station Magistrate), *Joji* (District Officer), *Likita* (Doctor); there was also the rank *Dupienne*, derived from the name of Mr. Dupigny, a former Resident of Niger Province, a rank *Borti* (Major Burton), *Mallam Smi* (Mr. Smith, a former Superintendent of Education), and *Jamsi Dogo* (lit. Long James, a title which referred to a former clerk in the Divisional Office); it was, not unnaturally, the lowest title on the rank-list. Another *ena* organized on modern lines was divided into two sections, a 'native' and a 'European' section, the former consisting of Nupe titles, the latter of Europeanized names and ranks, such as *Gomna*, *Joji*, *Likita*, *Rezdet* (Resident), *Kantoma*, *Misisi* (Mrs.), *Hafissa* (Officer), and *Karamin Joji* (Assistant District Officer). In the normal business of the *ena* these two sections behaved differently, and were bound by different rules of etiquette, native and 'European', which meant that the members of the 'European section' had to greet each other in European fashion, by lifting their caps, and had to eat at a table with fork and spoon. I could not help laughing when these rules were explained to me; but the head of the group pointed out, rather indignantly, that this was the most natural thing in the world; after all, 'a Governor does not eat with his hands'.

The seriousness with which these distinctions of ranks are observed, the realism with which this playing at society *à la Européenne* is enacted, forbids us to treat it merely as a childish and meaningless make-belief. Psychologically, it has the significance of a substitute for thrills and achievements which normal life cannot offer. The inclusion of titles and forms of conduct copied from the British officials in the country is part of that 'realism' which marks age-grade etiquette and precedence: it does justice to the new political order of the society, and partly also to the fact that high social position in present-day native society implies intimacy with the Administration and high British officials. If it were asked why the Bida *ena* chose as symbols for social gradation ranks and offices so far removed from their ordinary life, I should point out that there is less difference than one might assume between the two models which the *ena* could choose—the model of European and the model of native society. To the average Bida man the highest ranks and offices of his own society are no less remote and inaccessible than the office of a District Officer or Governor. We must add that the choice of a particular rank-system for the *ena* is in no way determined by the social stratum from which it is recruited. Bida age-grade associations of *tdlaka* and *saraki* alike adopt the highest ranks both of traditional and British society. Only for a small minority—the few *ena* of the ruling class—may these ranks and offices, and the whole exalted social life which they depict, one day become reality. For the large majority they represent an infinitely remote, imaginary social existence.

Here we are led to the wider problem of the relation between the world of pretence built up in the age-grade association and the values of 'real', that is, adult, social life. It can best be approached through a comparison of village and town *ena*. In the village association the social life enacted in the *ena*, and its prototype in adult life, stand in the relation of potentiality

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and reality. The prototypes of *ena* ranks are all (at least theoretically) within the reach of the individual members. Every one of the young men who have gone through the *ena* may find when he reaches the suitable age that elimination by death or illness of senior relatives has singled him out for the position of a family head, and thus for a *nūsa* rank. Indeed, the promotion which accompanied his age-grade career will serve as an important qualification in the bestowal of the real rank by chiefs and elders. In certain respects all *ena* ranks of the senior grade retain their validity outside the *ena*, and after its expiry. The code of age-grade etiquette expires with the age-grade association. Not so the symbols of age-grade achievement: a man will be called by his rank rather than his name years after the *ena* has come to an end, often even for life—especially if he had held a very high rank. Men who have once been elected as *Ètsu* or *Ndakotsu*, even when they are not, or not yet, appointed to a *nūsa* rank, will occupy a position of some distinction in their native village. Not only are they addressed and known by their *ena* titles, but village elders will pay attention to their opinion, and will entrust them with responsible tasks—in the organization of a ceremony, or of important collective work carried on outside the framework of the age-grade association. *Ena* ranks will never be confused with the political ranks of the village; they remain *tici nya ena*, ranks of the age-grade association. But although still only models of the 'real thing', they are 'real' in the sense that they indicate the varying qualification of individuals for access to the final social advancement. In the village *ena*, then, and similarly in the few age-grade associations in Bida which are recruited from the ruling classes, the *ena* rank-system anticipates a future social status; it introduces social concepts, and practises forms of conduct the effectiveness of which will be proved in adult life.

None of this is true of the average Bida association. Although here, again, the ranks attained in the senior grade accompany a man through life, they can claim no significance beyond that accorded to them by the rules of the game. A game indeed it is. These ranks let you enjoy fictitious contacts with a world of rank and power which you can never hope to enter in reality. Their upward trend, their incentive of competition, imply, not preparation or anticipation, but pretence, imitation—'substitution'.

Let us examine now the composition of the age-grade associations with regard to the social groups and strata which they absorb. In small villages a single age-grade association includes the youths of the whole village, and may even go beyond it, including the 'dependencies' of the village, the small *tunga* settlements, or linking a number of *tunga* settlements with one another. In the scattered hamlets round Bida the boys and young men of three to four hamlets join in a common *ena*. In very large villages (e.g. Kutigi) the age-grade is subdivided into a number of associations, each embracing one large, or two or three small, neighbouring, village *efu*. The age-grade itself, however, stretches across the whole village community, and the different associations conform to the same pattern with regard to the length of the term, and the time and year of the 'change-over' from grade to grade. In Bida the sub-

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division goes much farther, and we find a large number of disconnected associations, which are no longer co-ordinated or conform to a common pattern. I estimate the number of age-grade associations in Bida at 200. The individual *ena* is, again, bound up with locality, and includes boys and young men from the same part of the town. But here two new factors enter: social differentiation, and divided political allegiance. The very fact that the Bida *ena* finds its members among friends and close acquaintances already expresses the tendency to make it socially homogeneous, and to limit its membership to individuals from the same social stratum, or the same professional group. *Sarakiči* and *talakaži* never mix in the same *ena*. Nor do prosperous traders or Mallams join the same *ena* as peasants or small craftsmen; nor does, finally, the youth of the craft-guilds intermingle—glass-workers, blacksmiths, weavers, all have their separate age-grade associations. The limitation with regard to locality and close acquaintances is less rigid in the highest grades than in the junior grades. For as in the course of years the membership decreases, some members having died, others having left the *ena* or perhaps the town, it sometimes becomes necessary to open the membership of the higest grade to people from other parts of the town. Yet no *ena* would accept members from beyond the boundary of the town *ekpã*. The political solidarity of the three dynastic divisions of the town is thus reflected in, and even, as we shall see, actively supported by, the age-grade associations of the capital.

Here once more we gain insight into the social significance of the Nupe age-grade association: it underlines and fosters the solidarity of the existing social groupings. This means something different in the village and in the town. In the former it refers to the village community at large, and we find the age-grade associations stretching across it, and across the large kinship units and 'houses' into which the village society is divided. We can liken the age-grade system to a horizontal plane cutting across the separate structures of the extended families, with their wide base, tapering off to the apex of the one official representative of the family group, the titled elder. The age-grade association must thus counteract all possible separatist tendencies of individual kinship groups and sustain the large-scale integration on which the existence of the village as a social unit depends. In large villages this integrative scheme is in some measure narrowed down, owing to the size of the groups that can be absorbed effectively in a single age-grade association. It assumes, in fact, a somewhat different aspect, in uniting the extended kinship units within themselves—in the form of the large *efu* group—that is, in holding together the widely expanded structure which is to support the apex of a common official representative.

In the town the existing social grouping is created and held together by political and class interests. Here again, the age-grade association fosters the unity of a group which is to submit, in 'real' life, to a common head. But he no longer represents the 'apex' of an organically grown structure; as the *ena* is largely the product of a free, voluntary association, the group loyalty which it fosters is towards the freely chosen leader of a local political faction.

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The integrative tendencies in the *ena* are expressed in every one of the typical age-grade activities. In the village they revolve round the three centres of social life: work, recreation, religion. In the Bida *ena* the first is reduced to insignificant dimensions; the second is raised to almost paramount importance; the third remains on the whole unchanged, being only transferred to a different plane—Mohammedan religion.

I have already spoken of the role which the *ena* plays in organizing collective farm-work in the village. We need only add that these activities concern the higher age-grades more than the junior groups, the members of which are not yet skilled farmers. It is commonly agreed that every young man who has gone through the three grades leaves the *ena* a fully trained farmer. Not everyone can become a *Sode*; but the success of the team counts for much. Here the *Ndakotsu* will prove his capability as organizer. He will put his pride into making his team the most efficient—all means being counted as fair. An old man, still known as *Ndakotsu*, told me how he used to help his group of workers to defeat all the other teams by means of a charm which 'made their hoes go twice as fast'.

Under recreational aims we must understand both recreation in the narrow sense—age-grade feasts and 'parties'—and the conventional festivities with which the Nupe celebrate kinship events: naming ceremonies, weddings, and funerals. The recreational activities in the narrow sense concern the individual association; in the celebration of kinship events to which all young men who are related to the family are invited, members of different grades frequently join. The *Ndakotsu*, *Etsu*, and also the members of higher rank are expected to entertain the group in their houses at fairly regular intervals. There will be food, drinks, kola-nuts, and often drummers and dancers. In Bida the members of the *ena* meet at least once a month at such parties. Smaller festivities are attended only by the *ena* members themselves; to the larger meetings, especially those which mark the beginning and end of the *ena* term, friends and relations of both sexes are also invited. At one of the festivities with which the inauguration of the new age-grade term was celebrated in Kutigi I counted well over a hundred guests.

Let me take you to such an age-grade feast in Bida. It is held in the courtyard of the house. It starts in the afternoon or evening and lasts far into the night. The guests sit and squat in a closely packed circle, leaving a small space in the centre for drummers and dancers. On one side the host is sitting together with *Etsu* and *Ndakotsu*; as a rule they only sit and watch the performance; but the guests are ready at every moment to exchange the role of spectators for that of performers. There exist special *ena gbarúfuži* dances, performed at these occasions: they consist of a slow, graceful forward-and-backward movement of a row of dancers, five or six young men, who dance side by side, the arms stretched out and the body bent slightly forward, setting their feet in small, measured, steps. Group follows group in the dancing arena. Individual dancers leap into the 'arena', and perform a short solo or

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pas de deux of leaps and cart-wheels which, when executed skilfully, will be greeted with applause or, when less successful, with good-natured laughter and banter. There are special drum-signals for every higher *ena* rank which are sounded when the young men take the scene and join in the dance. Rich age-grade associations, or certain high rank-holders in the association, even have special dances and songs composed for them, which are played, not only at these meetings of the *ena*, but also whenever the *ena* members appear elsewhere at a public gathering. Drummers and woman dancer would walk up to the young man, and the dancer would recite the song which she composed in his honour.

> Moonlight makes all things good to look at.
> The *maba* bids the townsfolk farewell for the night.
> Give us of thy knowledge,
> Ibrahim Ganleyi,
> Thou grandson of wealth.[1]

Drum-signals and songs are not the only symbols of age-grade status. At every such festivity one of the drummers or some self-appointed 'master of ceremonies' will assume the role of an announcer. He is called *maba*; announcer and jester in one, he must be witty and have the gift of the gab. He collects the small gifts of money which guests make to drummers and dancers; he announces the name and rank of the donor and recites the virtues of his ancestors and famous relations (impressiveness counting more than truthfulness), adding such praises or witticisms as seem appropriate to the rank of the donor and the amount of the gift. We see again how closely Bida age-grade etiquette follows its model—the Nupe nobility; it copies every detail of its symbols of status and wealth, even such features as the specific interpretation of dignity forbidding persons of high rank to join in the common dance.

It is easily understood that in the village, along with the model, the copy must be absent also. At the gatherings of the village *ena* professional dancers and musicians are rarely summoned. There is no *maba* and no extolling the feats and virtues of celebrated ancestors. Age-grades and age-grade ranks 'own' their special drum-signals and dances; but they are associated with the group, and not with certain individuals who can afford to pay for the distinction.

The religious events in which age-grade associations participate concern all grades. In the pagan ceremony especially the different grades are allotted different tasks, which imply in varying measure admission to the esoteric ritual activities. The main religious ceremony of pagan Nupe, the *gunnu*, makes the *ena* members the protagonists of its ritual drama and dances. Another ceremony, which occurs only in the Benu

[1] This song, which was composed by the *saworo* group of dancers (see p. 302), in the honour of the young man called Ibrahim Ganleyi, was recorded at an age-grade feast in the house of a well-known Bida Mallam. It begins in the fashion of all Nupe songs with the quotation of a well-known proverb. The term *maba* which occurs in the second line is explained in the description that follows.

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sub-tribe of Kutigi, Enagi, and Dabbā, the *gani* even dramatizes the age-grade structure itself, its system of ranks, and the promotion from grade to grade. The *gani* assigns different ceremonial duties to the different grades, and involves certain symbolic tests of manhood of progressive severity which the different age-grades, one after the other, must undergo. The ceremony can, in fact, be regarded as a ritual of age-grade initiation. However, I must leave the description of this ceremony, closely associated though it is with the conception of age-grades, for a future occasion.

Let us turn to the Mohammedan religious ceremonies. At the celebration of the *Sallah* the age-grade associations play a much less specific role. They arrange a small festivity in the house of their group captains on the eve of the *Sallah*, at which—as in all houses of Bida and Mohammedan Nupe on that evening—a ram is killed and eaten. On the following morning the various *ena* of the town meet in the market to join the thousands of people who will follow the royal procession to the mosque and round the town walls, and gather later in front of the Emir's house, listening to drummers and musicians, and watching the display of the horsemen and the coming and going of the royal guests.

The celebration of the Mohammedan New Year, on the other hand, called *navũ* in Nupe (lit. torches), represents the climax of the public appearances of the Bida *ena*. The *navũ* is essentially a festival of youth. Its ritual acts, which appear to express, symbolically, the death and renewal of the year, are carried out by the young folk of Bida. On the eve of the New Year, at sunset, all the age-grade associations meet in the houses of their captains, and then march to the market of their town quarter, where all the associations of the *ekpā* forgather. They carry burning torches of grass in their hands, and are clad in simple, scanty garments. Three long processions, one in each *ekpā*, move slowly through the streets of Bida, down to the arm of the river flowing through that part of the town. The boys sing and dance while they walk, and throw their torches high up in the air, catching them as they fall. Arrived at the river, they take off their garments, and, clad only in a loin-cloth, wade into the water. There is no atmosphere of ritual or ceremony about it; they splash and play in the water, dance, wrestle, sing, and laugh at the clumsiness of those who drop and extinguish their torches. All the time the torch-play goes on; they play with the torches like balls, throwing and catching them. It is a dangerous game: I saw many lucky escapes, and quite a few incidents not so lucky.

Girls and young women, too, go to the river to bathe on the *navũ*, and the sexual attraction adds its stimulus to the general excitement. The *navũ* is, in fact, the only occasion on which I have seen the Nupe indulge in open, undisguised, sexual play. Torches are thrown into the water to light up the spot where girls are bathing almost naked; boys accost girls in the water, and couples disappear in the dark of the river-banks. But the *navũ* is in more than one respect a period of licence. Indeed, more important than this amorous play is the licence which was extended till about fifteen years ago to all acts of violence and assault that might occur on *navũ* night. And such liberty of action was not

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limited to acts of violence committed unwittingly, in the course of the torch throwing and playful fighting. The torch processions invariably led to serious organized fights between the three *ena* groups from the three divisions of the town. On their way back from the river one *ena* would ambush another, and try to invade its 'territory'. A fierce fight would ensue, lasting the whole night, fought with torches, sticks, stones, and even formerly (as my older informants maintained) with swords and guns. Serious wounds and loss of eyesight were a common feature of these 'battles of youth', which were fought with all the violence of heated party feuds. For party feuds they were—inspired by the political rivalry that is embodied in the threefold dynastic division of the kingdom. Let us reflect that the *navũ* provides the only occasion at which all the scattered age-grade groups of Bida are united in common action. The unity which they achieve is typical of Bida society—a unity based on partisanship and political factions. The acts of violence committed in the *navũ* fights led the Administration to intervene, and the fights were forbidden under *Etsu* Bello. Yet the memory is still vividly alive. Younger and older men who have once participated in a fight still proudly recount their feats which helped their side to win. But even young boys, novices at the *navũ*, are aware of the traditional significance of the ceremony. At the *navũ* of 1936 schoolboys from the Middle School had been encouraged by their teachers to send, for the first time, an official contingent to the *navũ* procession and to take their place among the age-grade groups. The boys did not anticipate a 'proper' *navũ*; for, as they explained to the director of the school, if they were to behave according to traditional standards, 'the *yan doka* (police) would get nasty'.

Certain important activities and obligations embodied in the age-grade association outlive the lifetime of the *ena* and accompany the individual through his whole adult life. The celebration of kinship events with the co-operation of age-grade associations is a first instance. All members of an *ena* are required to appear at the kinship feasts celebrated in the house of one of the *ena* members, and this duty applies both to comrades and ex-comrades. When a man celebrates the naming ceremony of a new-born child, or the wedding of himself or a close relative, or when he buries his father or elder brother, he will expect all his old comrades to come, to bring their congratulations or condolences, and to join the family guests. The Nupe greatly appreciate kinship festivities on an imposing scale, with a large—and generous—attendance. Age-grade loyalty is thus enlisted to make the festivities a success and to add to the prestige of the host. The readiness of the ex-members of an *ena* to fulfil these social obligations towards an old comrade depends, however, on the rank which he had held in the *ena*, and on the popularity which he enjoyed among his fellow members. If the age-grade association is thus designed to contribute to the social prestige of its ex-members in adult life, this dependence on the goodwill of one's comrades must, in anticipation, act as an important controlling influence upon behaviour in the age-grade association itself.

There exists also a certain clearly formulated code of conduct which

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lays down the rules of behaviour for *ena* members, and which is again valid for life. These rules demand friendliness towards one another, and avoidance of all quarrels; mutual assistance in work (though not with regard to loans); respect towards one's superiors in the group; and respect also for the sanctity of marriage among all fellow members. The significance of this last rule, which applies to brides as well as wives, in age-grade associations the lifetime of which comprises the years when the adolescents first awake to the reality of sex, when they court and finally marry, need not be emphasized especially. Yet only in the village can the rule be regarded as tending to eliminate quarrels and feuds which must disrupt the community. In Bida it is in effect abetting matrimonial laxity outside the small group to which this code applies. The narrow political and class loyalty of the Bida *ena* has thus its counterpart in the no less narrow *esprit de corps* with its qualified respect for matrimonial rights.

In the case of a breach of the age-grade code the culprit is summoned before the *Etsu* and *Ndakotsu*, who have the right to punish him. A first, light offence may entail only a warning. Repeated offences will be punished more severely. If a young man shows himself lazy in *egbe* work or reluctant to fulfil the obligations of collective farm-work, it is regarded as sufficient punishment to order him to work in the back row, among the youngest and most inexperienced *ena* members. In the case of more serious offences the penalty may take the form of social ostracism: the *Etsu* and *Ndakotsu* would rule that no member of the *ena* must attend festivities in the house of the offender. This sentence, I was told, soon brings the culprit to heel; he will kneel down in front of the *Etsu* and ask him for forgiveness, protesting that he would henceforth mend his ways. In certain age-grade associations, especially in Bida, fines are inflicted in the case of graver offences against the *ena* code. Expulsion is never practised, not even as a penalty of the gravest of all age-grade offences—misconduct with the bride or wife of a comrade. However, my inquiries into the occurrence of this offence were invariably answered with a blunt denial. Whether or not it was founded on fact I have no means of deciding. Quite possibly the *esprit de corps* of the *ena* forbade admission of so shameful a charge. The rather too sweeping denial with which my questions were met makes it appear not unlikely: 'We are like brothers,' many of my informants said, 'who would steal a brother's wife?'

In one respect, at least, this statement is undoubtedly an exaggeration. Age-grade comrades are not 'like brothers'. The intimate relation between age-grade comrades which this simile suggests is not true to facts. The relationship existing between friends, on the other hand, is often likened to the relationship between brothers, and does in certain respects resemble it. But age-grade comradeship as all informants agreed, is sharply distinguished from friendship, and the mutual obligations of friendship in no way coincide with those implied in *ena* membership. The subject is worth pursuing.

A man (or woman) will never have more than one friend. The friend may come from a different locality, a different profession, even a differ-

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ent tribe. I have seen friendship between a Nupe and a Yoruba in Jebba, and between a Kutigi farmer and a *koni* weaver, between a Bida tailor and a peasant from Patigi. Only social class remains an effective barrier even in friendship. Unlike age-grade comrades, friends will help each other with money. Friends may also exchange their children, that is, adopt each other's children, and marry them to their own children—as is also done by men who stand to each other in the relationship of classificatory brothers. This practice has the aim, as the people say, 'to increase friendship'. The essential difference between age-grade fellowship and friendship is thus clear: if the former fashions sentiments of 'belonging together' on the basis of similarities in outlook and interest, i.e. similarities involved in common locality, tribal origin, common occupation, the latter unites individuals *qua* individuals, in a union which is essentially new, and initiates rather than follows existing bonds and sentiments.

It remains to discuss the *ena nyentsugiži*, the age-grade associations of the girls, and the relation between the parallel age-grades of the sexes. I have said already that the girl's *ena* is limited to the youngest age-grade. As explanation of this different organization among the girls the people argue there can be no senior grades among girls, since the approximate age limit of the junior grade, 15 to 16 years, coincides with marriageable age. Unlike boys, the girls can no longer carry on in the *ena* once they are betrothed or married; their duties towards husband and family cannot be reconciled with age-grade activities. This explanation is borne out by the characteristic relations that unite the parallel *ena* of boys and girls. They both take exactly the same titles; and a boy and a girl who bear the same title enter a special, close, relationship: the boy calls the girl *nna*, mother, and the girl the boy *nda*, father. Girls' and boys' groups meet at the various feasts which age-grade associations arrange. It is the duty of the girls to prepare food and beer, the money being contributed by the boys, and to serve it at the *ena* feast. The *Etsu* of the boy's *ena* presents the girls with kola-nuts. The girls will sing and dance, and the boys will watch, and then, in their turn, the boys will perform before the audience of the girls. They all behave with utmost dignity, and even severity: the *ena* is quite obviously not the place for flirts and amorous play of the kind one can observe between boys and girls who meet in the street or market. The symbolism of the names by which girls and boys address each other—names which are never used by lovers or by husband and wife—emphasizes the 'respectable', non-sexual, nature of this relationship, even to the extent of excluding any reference to legitimate sex relations—marriage. It is supposed to happen occasionally that boys and girls who were brought together in the *ena* marry afterwards. I have not come across an actual case. The relationship between them, while the *ena* lasts, is definitely meant to be in the nature of comradeship, and must never lead to sexual relations. Yet once the girl is married, it may be difficult to maintain this aloofness. The danger of jealousy on the part of the husband, and possibly the temptation of carrying comradeship with the other sex to a more intimate relationship, forbid a continuation

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of the girls' *ena*. So much for the interpretation of the *ena nyentsugiźi* on the lines of the Nupe argument.

But if for women the age-grade career comes to an end with marriage, while for men marriage represents neither a limit nor even a conspicuous grade in the age-grade career, this reflects also the different sociological significance that marriage has for women and men. For women, it is the end of one life and the beginning of another. It means change of home and family bonds, and initiation into new aims and duties. For men, marriage—a first marriage—does not even coincide with the periodical readjustments in the labour-unit, i.e. the release from the *efakó* group which, as we have seen, takes place as a rule when a man has two wives or grown-up children. The social career of the men—achievement of economic independence, promotion to office, and responsible position in the community—only begins to fulfil itself long after their first marriage; that of the women is meant to enter its last phase in marriage. Indeed we have seen that when the woman claims the right of an independent, continued, social career, she must buy it with the sacrifice of the marriage union.

As regards the institution of the parallel age-grades its practical value seems to be that it prepares the ground for the first experiences of sex relations. Or rather, it aims at circumventing, and dulling, this unsettling first experience. Enabling the sexes to meet in the critical age, between 13 and 16, as it were on neutral ground, openly and respectably, it tends to remove some of the secrecy and unhealthy curiosity that is part of the mental transition from the self-contained existence of early youth to the new awareness of the polarity of sex. Our study of adult sex morality has left no doubt about the restricted effectiveness of this native 'co-educational' scheme. It must fail because it is, like all faulty education, in the nature of a palliative. It breaks the adolescent, we might say, gently, to the moral code of adulthood, but it adopts this code in all its dangerous narrowness and its rigid exclusion of amorous experiments and pre-marital sex relations. If age-grade discipline paves the way for adult sex morality, it does so also with respect to its repressions and inhibitions, and that final sweeping reaction against conventional morality which we could study in the adult life of the Nupe people.

To summarize. The age-grade associations include the adolescent male (and to lesser extent female) population of Nupe from early youth up to the threshold of adulthood. The most vital years in individual development are thus brought under the influence of this institution. We have studied the decisive part which it plays in moulding the personality of its members and in defining their attitude towards tasks and problems which they are to face in adult life. The essence of the institution of age-grades is, then, preparation—a twofold preparation. Its first aspect is the fashioning in the framework of the age-grades of sentiments of solidarity which are to bind the group at large.

This involves an important theoretical problem which has greatly engaged the attention of modern sociologists and social psychologists, namely, the possibility of transferring co-operation and solidarity

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
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achieved in one context of social life to other social contexts.[1] Our data allow us to make the following observation on this point: co-operation and solidarity fashioned in the age-grades appear capable of being transferred to other social contexts because of two conditions which they satisfy. Co-operation and solidarity are not left to grow at random and, as it were, unconsciously; rather they are of a specific, *ad hoc*, type; they clearly formulate their purpose and operate in the sphere of distinct awareness. Moreover, age-grade co-operation is actuated in circumstances of psychologically impressive nature, i.e. in the context of religious experiences. But age-grade integration also admits its own limitation in that it avoids attempting to bridge over the deepest existing social gulfs, of local community and social class.

The second aspect of the preparation embodied in the age-grade system is the training of the adolescent, through discipline and certain concrete activities, in the tasks and duties which await him in adult life, and in the values and incentives which he will have to make his own. In the village this preparation represents a first step towards a final social career; in Bida it mostly implants in the mind of the adolescent values and incentives, as it were, *in abstracto*, without promising equally their fulfilment in later life. It teaches people who will never share in directing the fate of their country to appreciate, and make their own, the motives and values which govern the conduct of those who do. It imparts, if not claims to responsible citizenship, yet its spirit.

THE MEANING OF NUPE LIFE

If we compare Nupe religious teaching with the teaching implied in the age-grade system we find that the two educational institutions supplement each other in many respects and that, between them, they take in the whole field of 'education for citizenship'. The Mallam school offers promotion to one social plane; the age-grade association practises promotion in the framework of a complex scale of steps and grades. The promotion afforded by religious education is 'real', in the sense that it involves social privileges in adult life; that practised in the age-grades is fictitious, even vicarious, and concerns mental readiness rather than concrete achievements. Religious education, finally, creates a loosely organized professional group and at the same time fosters a much wider psychological unity, which embraces the whole of Nupe society, across tribal and class boundaries. The age-grades create an intensive solidarity, but only in a very narrow framework, and give tribal and class boundaries a wide berth. Common to both religious education and the age-grades is the social upward trend, the motive of rise and promotion. This upward trend appears indeed as the paramount motive in Nupe cultural life. If it is possible to reduce a whole culture to a single formula, to a fundamental unitary *ethos*, we find it in this *leitmotif* of

[1] Cf. F. C. Bartlett, in *The Study of Society*, 1939, p. 43: 'A specially interesting question is: if cooperation is established in one respect, when and how far does this help individual members of the groups concerned to cooperate in other respects?'

2: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
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rather in its absence of purpose. Although it has a definite date like other rituals and although the masks must dress in secrecy, there is nothing sacred about the performance. No sacrifice or ritual preparations precede or accompany it; and the *elo* is positively stated to be nothing like a *kuti*, but merely *dzodzo*, 'play'. The dance seems to contain the remnants of some plot or dramatic theme; the various roles of 'male' and 'female' figures and of 'clowns' or 'robbers' can suggest nothing else. But again, the people deny that there is such a plot or that these 'roles' have any meaning. The *elo* songs, certainly, betray none. Here are a few of them, each consisting of a brief line which is endlessly repeated throughout the corresponding phase of the dance.

Zwákule, zwákule (meaningless).
I am calling Kolo (a name, here applied to *elo*),
he is coming slowly.
The *elo* matures every year.
They are calling Kolo, he swings his leg,
ebi du, ebi du (meaningless).
Every year we are making *elo*.
The *gara* appears, there is his face.

In a sense, the *elo* is a mixture of ritual and entertainment. But unlike the usual Nupe ceremonial, in which the ritual part precedes the 'play', the *elo* involves ritual only as it were in its administration (in the fixed date, the secret dressing-up of the actors, the formal apportionment of relevant duties); the rest is pure entertainment. Perhaps, in its original form, the *elo* was more fully a ceremonial, with some religious purpose as well as a plot. But even this the Nupe would deny; for although they sanctify the practice by ascribing it, in familiar manner, to the ancestor king, they impute to him no reasons other than (we might say) aesthetic ones. Nor have these reasons quite ceased to work. At the Bida *salla* in 1936 I saw a dancer with an unusual headdress which I had never seen before, neither at the previous *salla* nor on other occasions. The dancer himself was one of the *sorogi* dancers mentioned in a previous context;[1] but on his head he wore a brass cap with two horns. Subsequent enquiries elicited the fact that the headdress had been made by a Bida brass-smith to the specifications of the dancer: and the latter had meant to copy the horns of the *elo* masks which he had seen and admired in Mokwa.

(iv) *The Gani of Kutigi*

I have elsewhere described this cult and the manner in which it took root in Kutigi and the adjacent communities, so that I need

[1] See above, p. 188.

2: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
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only summarize the salient facts.[1] Unlike the *elo*, the *gani* can clearly be traced to its alien origin, and its importation into Nupe, by Moslem immigrants from the north, can even be dated with fair accuracy (having occurred probably about 1760–70). The Moslem character of the ceremonial is visible, above all, in the esoteric part, which takes the form of a symbolic burial in the Mohammedan manner; it is further emphasized by the often voiced claim that the whole ceremonial represents an observance of Islam, namely, the celebration of the birthday of the Prophet—a claim which has little validity.[2] Even so, the *gani* has been firmly adopted also by the pagan population and, what is more important, has been adopted as a ritual or at least as a ceremonial of serious and sacred import. Yet in calling the *gani* a ritual or ceremonial I am stating my own conclusions, couched in our conventional terminology. The Nupe have no suitable name for this performance which has many aspects of a ritual act without conforming to a 'ritual' as the pagans understand it. They all emphasize that it is not a *kuti*; but neither do they call it *dzodzo*, mere 'play', in spite of the great scope given to mummery, display, crude pranks, and merry-making generally. They either use the non-committal term *nya'nya*, 'dancing', or simply argue that 'the *gani* is the *gani*', that is, unlike any other tribal festivity. Linguistic usage, it seems, has not quite caught up with this novel and ambiguous species of ceremonial.

The *gani* ceremonial has for its main theme the periodical reconstitution of the village age-grade associations, that is, the acceptance of novices into the first grade and the promotion of older boys and youths to higher grades. These corporate promotions go hand in hand with a reshuffling of the various ranks held in each age-grade association, and hence with an upgrading or downgrading of its members. If the age grades thus appear dominated by competition and the notions of rank and career, they merely mirror as well as anticipate interests paramount in Nupe political life. As I phrased it elsewhere, age-grade life serves as an 'education for citizenship';[3] and this aspect too is given expression in the *gani* ceremonial, together with other ideas of more general import, bearing on growth and maturity.

In the ceremonial each age grade is assigned a specific role, acting under its leader, who bears the title *Ndakotsu*—'Grandfather of

[1] See 'The Gani Ritual of Nupe', *Africa*, vol. XIX, 1949.

[2] This is clearly shown by the discrepancy in the dates. The Birth of the Prophet (*Ma'ulid*) falls on the twelfth day of the first lunar month of the Mohammedan calendar (in 1934 the 29th March), while the *gani* celebrations start on the tenth day of the 4th month in Nupe reckoning (in 1934, the 25th June).

[3] See *A Black Byzantium*, pp. 383 *et seq.*

2: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
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the king'. Thus led, the age grades walk in procession through the village to salute the chief and all the other notables of the community, join in the dancing, engage in wrestling matches, and meet one another in a realistic 'battle', to be described presently. The esoteric rite of the *gani*, the 'burial service' mentioned before, is performed by the leaders alone, in a secret place away from the scene of the public festivities. The younger boys are all dressed up as girls and imitate, in exaggerated and ridiculous fashion, the walk and dance steps of the women. This masquerade, though highly elaborate and considered a most relevant aspect of the celebration, is not further explained; but the context makes it clear that it carries the same meaning of a change of roles which underlies the similar mummery of the *gunnu*.[1] For this meaning is again expressed, now by means of a conspicuous symbolism which everyone understands, in certain other episodes of the *gani*, meant to dramatize the admission of the novices and the various promotions from grade to grade. There is the 'death and burial', loudly mourned by the crowd, of a 'little girl', indicating the abandonment of infancy by the young boys about to enter the first grade. In a preceding phase a 'little boy' is similarly buried and mourned, that is, shown to abandon boyhood for adolescence. Lastly, the youths of the most senior grade appear dressed up as 'warriors' and 'horsemen', meeting their juniors in a mock battle which seems to symbolize the final stage of adolescence, when youth must hold its own against adults, compete and struggle with them, and break into their ranks. All these things actually happen in the 'battle', whose very realism seems symbolic of the severe competition for position and power which characterizes Nupe life. In brief, the *gani* ceremonial is a typical *rite de passage*, dramatizing the crucial phases of male adolescence and adoption into manhood. Seen against this background, an ususual feature of the *gani*, too, falls into place. Obscene sexual jokes and allusions, normally never used, appear in the *gani* songs and are freely bandied about during the festivities, both by old and young: we may conclude that they serve to throw into relief a final aspect of adolescence, sexual maturity.

The ceremonial lasts three days, and each day concludes with a hectic dance in which the sexes meet in utterly unrestrained fashion. Nor does this unrestraint end with the dance; for during the three nights all the normal rules of sex morality are in abeyance. This temporary abandonment of moral restraint, which applies to every person in the community, implies, of course, more than merely a symbolic reference to adolescence and sexual maturity. It represents one of those periodical concessions to moral

[1] See above, p. 113.

2: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
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or sexual licence which are familiar from many societies, primitive and advanced. We know that they occur also in the traditional annual celebration of the *gunnu*. And here it seems significant that the people of Kutigi and the other communities now performing the *gani* have abandoned the *gunnu* in this fixed, annual form.[1] Whatever other reasons have contributed to the abandonment of the annual *gunnu*, the fact that it shared with the *gani* this one feature may well have been decisive; for it would seem to be in the very nature of this concession to unrestraint that it must not be duplicated.

There is evidence to show that the sexual licence belonged to the *gani* already in its original form in which it reached Nupe country. This original *gani* equally included some connection, apparently broad and unspecific, with age-grade life and male adolescence.[2] To some extent, then, the Nupe found in the *gani* a cult fortuitously congenial to their own interests and ideas. But let us note that the *gani* expresses them with unaccustomed sharpness: the masquerade of boys as girls, sketchily treated in the *gunnu*, is fully exploited in the *gani*; and nowhere else is age-grade life dramatized with such effect.

Other 'Nupeisms' in the *gani* are clearly the result of adaptation and remodelling. Thus, though the ceremonial retained its original name, its songs and prayers are in Nupe; the latter, spoken at the secret 'burial service', conclude with the typical Nupe formula—'May the whole town have health'; the musical instruments, the music itself, the dance steps, and the whole design of the ceremonial, with an esoteric part preceding the public 'merry-making'—all these are taken from the traditional practice. Yet equally, the *gani* contains conspicuously novel and 'un-Nupe' features. The very notion of a ceremonial having a proper plot and being staged as a drama with consecutive scenes has no parallel in Nupe. The same is true of the precise symbolism of the *gani* and of the masquerade of warriors and horsemen: the latter, incidentally, appear as riders of hobby-horses, which mummery is equally unknown in the rest of Nupe. So are the standards with which the age grades parade during the ceremonial, some of which are combined with crude symbols of the sexes. The open eroticism of the *gani*, finally, contrasts strikingly with the normal mood of Nupe ceremonials.

[1] See above, p. 83. It will be remembered that the performance of the *gunnu* as a movable rite (which is still practised in Kutigi) does not include the 'mixed' dance and the period of erotic licence.

[2] The evidence in question is based on accounts of the *gani* celebrations in its country of origin and among the nomadic Fulani. See *Africa*, vol. XIX, 1949, p. 177, n. 2.

565 Below the *sarakiši* comes a group of minor office-holders, heads of the Bida craft guilds, who receive their titles and the customary gift of a turban from the *Etsu*. The head of the Bida brokers, who acts as an agent for the king in trade and commercial matters in the capital, holds a similar position.

565 567 The lowest titled class in the Nupe social order is that of the *ena wuši*, whose members bear the titles of the former court slaves.[13] Formerly these titles were held by men of high birth captured in war and given titles in return for loyal service; they could rise in the service of the king as bodyguards, police, messengers, tax collectors, etc. A new king usually took over the officials of his predecessor.

565 Below the orders of title-holders come the commoners (*talakiši*), who constitute the great majority of the population.

PATRONAGE[13]

566 675 A system of patronage or clientship is an important feature of Nupe society. The client (*bara*) attaches himself to the household of his patron as a servant or in some other capacity from which he may rise to the position of a trusted friend and may even marry into the patron's family. Clients may be divided into three categories: those who seek political protection without surrendering their independence, who do not work for their patron but are regarded rather as "adopted children"; those who are poor and anxious to avoid hard work on the land; and those who hope to achieve some eminence by attaching themselves to a man of position and influence. The clients of the royal princes may rise to high positions and eventually become the *bara* of a ruling king, their rank then being almost equal to that of the official nobility. Indeed, rich and ambitious men may even buy themselves a clientship in the house of a royal prince or of the king.

The system is beneficial to both parties, the client receiving material benefit and protection and possibly a title, and the patron acquiring servants, soldiers for the contingent he must provide for the king's army, and followers to add to his prestige.

AGE-SETS[14]

561 Boys and young men in a village or town are grouped in three graded associations: *ena wawagiši*, for boys between the ages of about 10 and 15; *ena dzakangiši*, of ages *c.* 15 to 20, and *ena gbarufuši*, of ages *c.* 20 to 30. Every age-set (*ena*) passes successively through these grades. Except in the capital, there is only one set or association in each grade within the local community at any one time. Each is led by an older man or by a boy from the highest rank of the next grade. The head of the highest, known as *ndakotsu*, is chosen from among adults and has considerable influence. The main emphasis within the age-sets is on seniority. Titles, often copying those for adults in the wider society, are distributed by the leader on the basis of reputation, ability, and merit, sometimes anticipating the future rank of the holder. Those acquired in the highest grade may be retained by the young man for life. The chief public functions of the sets lie in the execution of co-operative tasks, but they also have a recreational side.

For girls, an association (*ena*) exists only for the lowest age-set.

GOVERNMENT[15]

631 Prior to the more recent developments of local government, the Nupe kingdom was divided into four zones for the purposes of political, judicial, and tax administration. The first was the territory of the conquered and tributary "outside" peoples; the second, within the boundaries of the kingdom proper, included the

[13] For a description of slavery proper, see below, p. 41.
[14] Nadel, 1942, pp. 122–7.
[15] Nadel, op. cit., pp. 383–401; 1935a, pp. 209–71, 292.
[16] Nadel, 1942, pp. 115–18